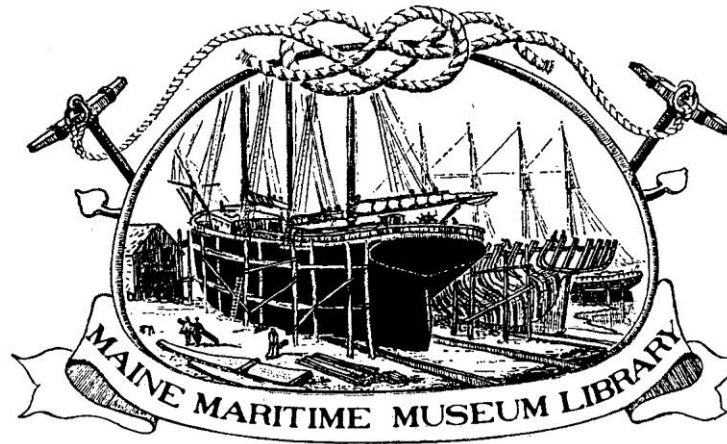


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**Inventory for  
Manuscript Collection  
MS - 43**

**Captain William Higgins Papers  
1835-1876**

by  
Elisabeth Meier  
September 2018

1 box  
0.4 linear feet  
*Accession no. 79.92.1-6*

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## Abstract

### **Higgins, William, Captain (1791-1872)**

#### **Papers, 1835-1876**

1 box

Ship master, ship owner, and farmer from Bowdoinham, Maine.

This collection contains letters, accounts, bills of lading, customs certificates, and related material from Bowdoinham Captain William Higgins and the vessels he commanded or owned. It chronicles Higgins' role in taking lumber from Wilmington, North Carolina to the Caribbean as well as his participation in the antebellum coasting trade. It also contains some accounts from Higgins's farm in Bowdoinham and letters among his immediate family, including a son just starting off to sea.

Gift of Edward Ackerman.

MS-043. Accession #79.92.1-6.

Finding aid (folder level control) in repository.

#### **Added entries—persons:**

Higgins, Jeremiah, Captain

Higgins, William, Captain (1791-1872)

#### **Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels):**

*Llewellyn* (brig)

*Reindeer* (two-mast schooner)

*William Purington* (brig)

#### **Added entries—key terms:**

Bowdoinham (ME)

Coasters (ships)

Coastwise shipping

Higgins family

Lumber trade

Ship Captains

Ships – owners

Sugar trade

West Indies trade

## Acquisition

This collection was donated by Edward Ackerman, of Thomaston, Maine, in 1979.

## Restrictions

There are no restrictions on this collection.

## Physical Condition

The papers are in good condition, with usual wear along creases and edges.

## Processing Notes

This collection was initially processed by Erika Guerrero-Reyes as part of a graduate course in archival methods in 1984.

## Historical Note

William Higgins (1791-1872), the son of Captain William and Joannah (Coombs) Higgins, was a sea captain, ship-owner, and part-time farmer from Bowdoinham, Maine. He commanded several Bowdoinham-built vessels, including the *William* (brig), *Fisher* (brig), *Llewelyn* (brig), and *William Purington* (brig), and owned substantial shares in several others. He specialized in the West Indies trade, particularly in taking lumber from Wilmington, North Carolina to the Caribbean islands. Higgins retired from the sea in the 1850s, but continued to manage his vessels' business from his Bowdoinham farm.

William Higgins married Susan Blanchard (1798-1891) in 1823. They had seven children: William H. (1826-1845), Melvin O. B. (1828-1849), Susan Orillia (1830-1901), Benjamin L. (b. 1832), Georgeanna (1835-1920), Josephine (b. 1837), and Deborah (1839-1852). Two of his sons, William H. and Melvin, went to sea as teenagers, though they both died young. Benjamin L. Higgins stayed ashore, ran an icehouse in Bowdoinham, and manufactured cigars. Georgeanna moved to California with her husband, Martin Chapman, who worked as a blacksmith in the gold mining camps along the Yuba River.

## Scope and Content Note

The bulk of this collection is correspondence about William Higgins's maritime affairs. It includes letters from the merchants that he worked with in Wilmington, North Carolina and Guadeloupe, as well as a network of captains and other partners along the eastern seaboard. It also contains letters from Higgins to his wife, Susan, written when Higgins was at sea. These provide a detailed and more comprehensive account of his business. There is also correspondence to and from other family members, including Higgins's son, William H., when the latter was starting out at sea, and his daughter, Georgeanna, in the California gold camps.

The collection also contains accounts, customs certificates, bills of lading, enrollments, and other documents from the brigs *Llewelyn* and *William Purington*, both commanded by William Higgins, and the schooner *Reindeer*, commanded by his cousin, Jeremiah. These detail the vessels' business in the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and along the Atlantic coast in the antebellum period.

Non-maritime material in the collection consists of a folder of receipts from Higgins's farm and household in Bowdoinham and a few miscellaneous papers from other families. The latter includes receipts, legal notices, and an inventory of the post office at Brockway's Mills, Sangerville, Maine.

## Box and Folder List

| Box | Folder |   |
|-----|--------|---|
| 1   | 1      | <i>Llewelyn</i> (brig), papers, 1835-1841   |
|     | 2      | <i>Reindeer</i> (schooner), papers, Captain Jeremiah Higgins, 1840-1841 and undated   |
|     | 3      | <i>William Purington</i> (brig), papers, 1842-1854  |
|     | 4      | Accounts, William Higgins, Bowdoinham, 1836-1872  |
|     | 5      | Account book, William Higgins, 1837-1870  |
|     |        | Correspondence, outgoing  |
|     | 6      | William Higgins to Susan Higgins, 1836-1849   |
|     | 7      | William Higgins to Susan O., Melvin, and William H. Higgins, 1844-1845  |
|     |        | Correspondence, incoming, business  |
|     | 8      | J. Burtel, Point-a-Pitrie, Guadeloupe, 1851-52  |
|     | 9      | William M. Harris, Wilmington, NC, 1851-54  |
|     | 10     | Captain Abraham Douglas, 1853-54  |
|     | 11     | Benjamin Adams, J.H. Allen & Co., Charles M. Cock, W. Elliot, John Fisher, Captain Charles Marsh, and M.L. Page   |
|     |        | Correspondence, incoming, family  |
|     | 12     | William H. Higgins, 1844-45   |
|     | 13     | Melvin Higgins, Benjamin L. Higgins, and Ine (Josephine?) Higgins   |
|     | 14     | Georgeanna (Higgins) Chapman & family, 1867-1873  |
|     | 15     | J.F. Blanchard, Daniel Gould, Nathaniel Gould, and A.H. Pendleton, 1847-1872  |
|     | 16     | Benjamin L. Higgins, power of attorney for the Portland & Kennebec Railroad Co., 1855   |
|     | 17     | Captain Eben Dunton and William Fowler, receipts  |
|     | 18     | Rufus Carr, notice to vacate a tavern stand in Bowdoinham, 1858, and Asher E. Hall, declaration on taking charge of the Brockway's Mills Post Office, Sangerville, Piscataquis County, 1876 |
|     | 19     | Notice to Union Soldiers, homestead claims, c. 1874   |
|     | 20     | Envelopes   |